

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



FOUNDED 1836

WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE

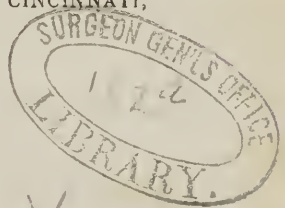
MEDICAL STUDENT'S

DANGERS AND MEANS OF SAFETY;

A DISCOURSE

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH, CINCINNATI,

JANUARY 9, 1831.



==
BY THE REV. B. P. AYDELTT, M. D.

==
CINCINNATI:

J. WHETSTONE, JR. PRINTER.

.....

1831.

Cincinnati, January 11th, 1831.

TO THE REV. DR. AYDELOTT:

Dear Sir,—In behalf of the Medical Class, we return you their most sincere thanks for the very able and interesting discourse you honored them with on last Sabbath; and, with great respect, they request that you will favor us with a copy for publication.

Your compliance will not only be highly gratifying, but likewise a means well calculated for the promotion of much good.

Respectfully, Yours, &c.

ALEXANDER GUY,	}	<i>Committee.</i>
HARVEY LEWIS,		
FRANKLIN WHITE,		

Cincinnati, January 11th, 1831.

TO MESSRS. ALEXANDER GUY, HARVEY LEWIS and FRANKLIN WHITE, Committee, &c.

Gentlemen,—As the discourse delivered by me at the request of the Class of the Medical College of Ohio, was intended for their benefit, so if they suppose that the reading of it will be of further benefit to them, they are at liberty to commit it to the press.

Accept my best wishes for yourselves individually, and for the class whom you represent.

Your Friend and Servant,

B. P. AYDELOTT.

A DISCOURSE.

Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.—Ps. cxix. 9.

THE HOPE of a country is its youth. The aged have almost accomplished their work,—their interest in the world is weakening, and their influence fast declining. Those who are at present actively engaged on the stage of life are doing what may be for good or for evil; but it depends chiefly on those who are coming forward, whether this good shall be consummated, or this evil counteracted.

The inheritance which each generation receives from that which goes before, consists to a great extent of unfinished plans, of views *beginning* to be realized and principles not thoroughly acted out. Hence it is impossible for any one generation to ruin their country, unless the next tread in their steps. How important then that the youth of a country, those who are speedily to put their hands to the business of life, should be wiser and better than their fathers are, that they may obviate as far as possible the mischiefs entailed upon them, and carry onward every salutary design.

The foregoing remarks are impressively exemplified in the career of David, the inspired penman of our text. He grew up in an eventful period. The government of his country was changed; its affairs were sadly mismanaged; and by the disastrous overthrow at Gilboa, the nation seemed on the brink of ruin. Its concerns at this crisis passed into his hands, and by retracing the steps of his predecessor, he not only regained what had been lost, but added much to the true glory of his country, and laid a strong foundation for its future prosperity. Surely, the experience of such a man—one who through toils and perils at every step, had risen from a sheep-fold to a throne, and all whose path was marked by wisdom and industry, an unbending integrity and a generous devotedness to the public good—the experience of such a man must be invaluable to those who are disposed to make a proper use of it. That portion of his experience which particularly concerns us at present, he records in the words of our text—“Wherewith” he asks,

“shall a young man cleanse his way?” and then answers this important question, thus: “By taking heed thereto according to thy word.”—i. e. the word of God, or divine truth.

Though this portion of Holy Writ was undoubtedly penned by the Royal Psalmist when considerably advanced in years, yet the character of his early life, of which we have so full an account, makes it manifest that he had uniformly directed his own way by the principle here laid down; and consequently he could testify from a thorough experience, to its truth and its preciousness:

It is implied in the first clause of the text, that there are dangers besetting the path of youth, and we are taught in the last, the means of avoiding them. To some of the sources of these dangers,—especially as they relate to the student of medicine, I now purpose to call your attention, and then the means by which, under the divine blessing, you may safely pass through these dangers, will be pointed out.

I. OF YOUR DANGERS.

The 1st source of danger to the young man which I shall notice, is the *natural bias of the heart to evil*.

If there is any one truth which may be emphatically termed a *pervading* truth of the word of God, it is that of the natural bias of the heart to evil. It is not only asserted in the holy volume in places innumerable and in much stronger language than that I have employed; but it is seen in every scripture narrative, and it is implied in every warning and exhortation, and in almost every doctrine which there meets the eye.

I need not attempt to prove the fact of man's inherent tendency to evil by an appeal to history; for history, ancient and modern, has been one part of your studies, and you could not have given it the most moderate attention without being sensible of the fact, that were every action which proceeded from the selfishness, the cruelty and the unhallowed ambition of the human heart,—every event that spread tears and blood over the records of our race—to be stricken out, this most voluminous of all studies would be reduced to a very narrow compass indeed.

Neither need I point you to the actual state of society in the present day for proofs of this corruption;—your own observation, however small, must have satisfied you on this point.—What do those laws of good breeding which not even the most

reckless dare altogether overlook,—what do most legislative enactments,—what do courts of justice, and judges, and prisons, and chains, and gibbets,—nay, what do the rearing of christian churches, and the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of its sacred ordinances,—what do these teach us? Do they not as with one voice, proclaim that man is a fallen and depraved creature, that the restraints of decorum, of law, and of religion are all necessary to his social existence?

Now this natural bias of the heart to evil, is peculiarly a source of danger to the young; because in them it is accompanied with an ardour of feeling, an inexperience, and an unsuspecting temper, which can ordinarily be remedied only by more mature years and a larger acquaintance with the world.

2. *The nature of your studies* is a source of danger to you.

There are two reasons why your peculiar studies may be a snare to you,—the first is, their interesting character. Mere human learning never presents a more attractive field than that which is spread before you. Who that has the least taste, or the least intellectual excitability can contemplate the wonders of Anatomy and Physiology, the brilliant discoveries of modern Chemistry, and the variety and beauty of the natural sciences, without danger of being completely absorbed by them? In the pursuit of these is not the student too apt to lose sight of those interests in comparison with which all worldly objects are inexpressibly little and low?

Another source of danger to you in your studies, is the marked absence of moral and religious reflections in most of the books put in your hands.

I am not disposed to encourage the charge so often preferred against medical men of being sceptical. Such sweeping censures are almost always unjust. And I doubt not but, in point of morals and piety, Physicians will bear honorable comparison with the members of any other worldly profession. Still it must be allowed that when the favorable opportunities which writers in medicine and its collateral branches possess of occasionally introducing most important moral and religious reflections,—when, I say, these opportunities are considered, it is amazing that they are so seldom made use of. It is recorded that the bare sight of a skeleton converted Galen from Atheism to the belief of a God. And how is it possible to contemplate the mechanism and functions of the human system, to investi-

gate the structure and changes of the globe on which we tread, to study those laws that govern all animate nature, and (if I may so express myself,) to look into the new world which chemistry unfolds,—and not be struck with the power, the wisdom, and the beneficence of Deity, and not discover arguments and illustrations without number for the great truths of ethics and christianity? Now if reflections of this character, which might be so opportunely introduced, are altogether neglected, must it not have an unhappy influence over the student? Will it not accustom him to fix his mind on the works of creation to the exclusion of their author and the great truths of his word? And surely what tends to such a result cannot but endanger the moral and religious principles.

3. Another source of danger is *absence from your home and friends*.

Home is the centre of our best affections, the inexhaustible fountain of moral influence, the scene of purest earthly happiness. Without the division of mankind into families, and the constant operation of the endearing ties of husband and wife, parent and child, sister and brother, civilization would be utterly impossible. To discern the salutary influence of domestic associations, let the men of some twelve or fifteen hundred households be drafted and marched from their homes and encamped under martial law; and at the end of a month or six weeks, go among them and mingle in their intercourse, and even in this short interval, the process of moral deterioration will have gone so far as to shock and disgust you.

I know, my young Friends, that the circumstances of those I have just described are not exactly parallel with yours. There are many things in your situation which tend to counteract the evil effects of absence from home and friends; still there is great room for fear. The youth who comes here to enjoy the advantages which its medical school affords, finds himself at once in a circle equally inexperienced and unrestrained with himself, and exposed to all the corruptions of a large town.—Home, home, that refuge from the enemy, that fortress of good morals—he has no home to go to, with its restraining, softening and purifying influences. Beset with temptations, and far away from a father's counsels and a mother's tears, is it wonderful that so many students of our medical colleges should be led astray, and some of them irretrievably ruined!

Having now dwelt upon your dangers, permit me

II. To point you to some of those MEANS BY WHICH, under the divine blessing, YOU MAY SAFELY PASS THROUGH THESE DANGERS.

1. The first and most important of these is *Prayer*.

Surely if there be any case in which assistance and direction from on high are peculiarly needed, it is your's. It is only in dependence on God you will find that wisdom and strength which will carry you safely through the perils that surround your path. What hope can there be for one so exposed, and yet so unused to the wiles of the enemy but in the arm of heaven. The prayerless young man does not take heed to his way according to God's word.

There is another reason beside the immediate advantage of prayer which makes it important to you. It is only in the exercise of that sincere trust in the power and mercy of God which naturally seeks to breathe itself out at a throne of grace, that you can expect to be benefitted by those other means of safety to which your prudence may lead you to have recourse. You may plan, you may lay down good rules for yourselves, you may form excellent resolutions, you may labor hard,—but what real good will all these do you without the blessing of heaven? And where has God ever promised that he will give his blessing, but in answer to prayer?

2. Let me advise you, my young friends, to appropriate a portion of each day to the *reading of the Holy Scriptures* and other *good books*.

"The gospel," says that distinguished Philosopher, Dr. Locke, "has God for its Author, Salvation for its end, and Truth without any mixture of error, for its matter."* And this testimony, be it remembered, was given at the close of a life of profound study and long experience.

I need not multiply scripture quotations, to shew the importance of moral and religious knowledge to one who is preparing for the duties of an arduous and highly responsible calling.

* The reputation of Dr. Locke as a Philosopher of the human mind, has been so great as to cause the fact of his having been a *Physician* to be very generally overlooked. He practised medicine for some time at Oxford; and it was his skill as a physician manifested in curing the Earl of Shaftesbury, of a dangerous abscess in the breast that first introduced him into political life. See his Biography, prefixed to the Boston Edition of his "Essay concerning Human Understanding." 1813.

Let our text suffice,—“Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” A chapter of the Bible read when you rise in the morning, or just before retiring to rest at night, cannot, with the divine blessing, but have a happy effect in guarding you against the many snares to which you are now exposed, and giving you that elevation and purity of character which constitute the brightest presage of future professional usefulness.

In this most favored age there are so many books distinguished for the ability and the interest with which they convey moral and religious knowledge, that it is difficult, in attempting to select some for recommendation, to confine myself to the necessarily brief limits which this occasion demands.

Read Dr. Payley's *Evidences of Christianity*. This writer is remarkable for his unrivalled candor, clearness of method, and precision of language.

Study Butler's *Analogy*;—I say, *study*,—for in the particular department to which it belongs, there is not another work of such profound views and close argument. It is adopted as a text book in many of the most respectable Universities. Few books are so well calculated to call forth and strengthen the higher powers of the mind.

That eminent Statesman and Philanthropist, William Wilberforce, has written a work well worthy of your attention. It is entitled “A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System, &c.”

Let me call your attention also to the life of Dr. John Mason Good, which has been recently republished on this side of the Atlantic.* Dr. Good was perhaps the most learned Physician that ever lived. There was scarcely a branch of science of which he was not perfect master. His aptitude for the attainment of languages and the extent of his acquirements in them are almost incredible. Had he written nothing but his *Lucretius*, he would have been remembered by future generations as one of the first classical scholars of the age. Had he published nothing beside his translation of the book of Job, he would have ranked as a great oriental scholar, and an admirable biblical critic. And had he left nothing but his “*Study*

* The Life of Dr. Good, and most of the other works recommended in this Discourse, may be obtained at Mr. Bradford's Book Store, on Main, near Second street.

of Medicine,"—"his name," to use the language of a distinguished Physician, "would have gone down to posterity, associated with the science of medicine itself, as one of its most skilful practitioners and one of its most learned promoters." In addition to these immense attainments, the personal piety of Dr. Good gave an inexpressible dignity and charm to his character.

Only one other work will our time permit us to mention, and that is, Dr. Gregory's Letters on the Evidences, the Doctrines, and the Duties of Christianity. I know not where you could put your hand on another book upon these subjects containing in so small a compass the same amount of valuable information, and that conveyed in a style peculiarly lucid and felicitous.

3. I would counsel you to attend regularly upon *public worship*.

This is a means of grace which may be enjoyed without at all interfering with your studies. The Lord's day must be spent in idleness, or worse than idleness, or in religious improvement. And as the neglect of public worship is sure evidence of a downward course, so there is strong ground for hope, of that young man who is found regularly sitting under a preached gospel. He must first completely withdraw himself from the influences of the sanctuary before he can be wholly ruined. And again, I will venture to assert that, as a general rule, the student who is conscientious in the duties of the Sabbath, will maintain the most respectable standing in his class:—because, (to mention no other reason,) the holy repose of the Lord's day is peculiarly calculated to invigorate the mind for the employments of the coming six.

There is another advantage which you may derive from an attendance at church—you will there be in the way of forming those associations that will really benefit you now, and in your future professional life. The day is past when a family can habitually neglect public worship, and yet be respected in the community. Intimacy with such families would be sure to injure you as students, and would form no recommendation of you when, after having received your degree of Doctor of Medicine, you come forward as candidates for public patronage.

4. Let me advise you to *be careful in your choice of a place of boarding*.

Every judicious parent feels the importance of this point; hence, when he sends his son at a distance to pursue his studies, he is anxious to learn in what sort of family he is situated.—He knows that the welfare of a young man depends very much upon the character of the household of which he is an inmate.

The best rule I can give you on this subject, is to select such a place as is most like *home*,—I mean like home in its moral influences. Endeavor therefore, first of all, to get into a private family. Here you will have the advantage of domestic regulations as well as domestic comforts.

If the privilege of a private family is not attainable by you, seek out a place where only a few, select boarders are taken; and by all means, give the preference to that house, the heads of which are serious people. But never, unless as a last resort, take up your residence in a public house. I do not envy that young man his feelings who when he finds himself under such a necessity, does not oftentimes sigh for the sweet charities of home. To me there is something chilling in the very atmosphere of a tavern. It is the region of almost pure selfishness. Every one finds himself there a stranger,—an isolated being;—no one cares for him. In a public house there are absent nearly all those moral influences which are vitally important in the formation of the character of youth, and there are present nearly all those evil influences which tend to ensure its ruin.

5. I can present on this occasion only one other means of escaping the dangers to which you are exposed:—and that is, *cherish a deep respect for those of your fellow-students whose spirit and walk are decidedly christian*, and, if possible, *cultivate an intimacy with them*.

“A companion of fools,” says the wise man, “shall be destroyed;”—and we may add that in the fellowship of the good there is safety.

I once stood, my young Friends, on the ground that you now occupy; and I well recollect what my thoughts were when I looked around and marked some about me, who widely differed from the multitude of us. I saw that they were consistent with their principles, and I felt that these principles were better than my own. These reflections, I am persuaded, had a happy influence over me in restraining me from evil, and leading my mind towards better things.

The presence of even three or four pious young men is a great blessing to any college; and let each individual consider that how far their exemplary conduct will benefit himself depends greatly upon the feelings he entertains towards them.—To cherish a respect for the good is a likely means of becoming such ourselves; but to despise them is the surest way of hardening our own hearts.

I have now pointed out the principal sources of danger to you, with the best means of avoiding them. In the performance of this duty I have been necessarily obliged to refrain from going into many particulars. I have said nothing specially, on the subject of intemperance, of gaming, or of the theatre.—Time would not permit this. Indeed I felt there was the less necessity for remark on these things, because such is happily the improved and improving character of the present age, that he who wishes to sustain even a fair moral standing in the community must carefully avoid these fountains of pollution; and because the young man who will acknowledge the propriety of any of the counsels I have just given, must be sensible of the evil of these things. The student of medicine who is sincerely looking upward for direction and support;—who takes the word of God as a lamp to his feet and a light to his path;—who fixes an eye of laudable ambition on such a model as that exhibited in the life of Dr. Good;—who is conscientious in the duties of the Lord's day;—whose heart delights in the moral influences of home;—and who esteems the religious for their religion's sake,—such an one would shrink with abhorrence from the intoxicating bowl, the inticements of the gaming table, and the contaminations of the theatre.

My young Friends, you are looking forward to an honorable profession—a profession of solemn responsibility, and one that demands high moral as well as intellectual attainments, properly to discharge its many and arduous duties. Bring, therefore, your whole mind and heart to the work of preparation.—Let no excellence be wanting on your part that will commend you to the wise and the good. And while you are seeking those attainments that will enable you to go to the bed side of the sick, properly qualified to give them the benefits of the healing art in its highest state of improvement; be careful also to cultivate that seriousness of character, and that tenderness of feeling which will cause you to be welcomed as an angel of mercy

in the chamber of affliction. Not merely the lives, but the reputation of individuals and the peace of families must frequently be committed to the Physician. Let every anticipation of such a trust stimulate you to deserve it.

But, my young Friends, I should be utterly wanting in my duty on this sacred occasion, were I to close without reminding you that you may never reach the high mark towards which you are striving. Death may cut you off from the object before you. Scarcely a session passes round in a Medical College, respectable for its numbers, without removing some of them into eternity. It is oftentimes with me a subject of melancholy reflection to look back on the days when I was engaged as you are, and call to mind the number of promising young men who started in the career of study with as ardent hopes and bright prospects as myself, but who sunk into the grave before their hands were permitted to touch the honors of the Doctorate!

And as all experience makes it certain that such must be the case with some of you, and as it is equally uncertain who may be of this number, so I can most reasonably ask each one of you to suppose himself the individual, who before the close of his studies shall be summoned to appear before the Judge of quick and dead. Ah, my young Friends, are you prepared for such an event as this? Have you yet given it the thought it deserves? Do you ever consider the import of these declarations—declarations as rational as they are scriptural?—"except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,"—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Go, I would affectionately beseech you, when you retire from this house of prayer; go, to the secret recesses of your closet and take the gospel of "God our Saviour" in your hands, and when you have read his own faithful warnings, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish,"—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,"—then let the solemn question be put—"O my God, am I prepared to appear before thee?" AMEN!

Med. Hist.

WZ

270

A 975m

1831

c.1

